

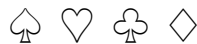
CONTEMPT for the OGRE-POET

There is no book in the fiefdom, not since the ogre-poet came.

For nigh on eight years, the ogre-poet has terrorised the wildfolk of the realm, feasting on their flesh when e'er he finds them. The only safety was found in literature: the ogre-poet would wander off, distracted by the book and forgetting his hunger for the month.

In three days' time, the sickle moon is set to rise and the ogre-poet will again venture out on his fleshfeast.

You have three days to stop him.



CONTEMPT for the OGRE-POET is a one-shot storytelling and role-playing game for a pack of cards and two-to-four friends. It's relatively freeform and designed to be played collaboratively - unlike traditional role-playing games there is no Games Master.

In addition to a full pack of playing cards without jokers, each player will need a pen/cil and some paper (an index card will do) to write upon their character.

Characters begin the game with ten nouns in their *wordhoard* and an ability. The wordhoard is a collection of words that generally represent the mental well-being of the character and are used to construct *kennings* in order to activate abilities. *If a character's wordhoard is depleted, they continue to play though cannot activate any abilities.*

At the start of the game, each player decides upon a race (see the descriptions below) they would like to play. No two players may choose the same race. Each player writes their character's name on their sheet and the nouns SOAK, WILD, GLITTER and SICKLE into their wordhoard. That player adds the two nouns typical of their race and a further four nouns of their own devising that describes the general mood of the character.

The spayed are hulking eunuch big-cats; typically leonine, though the advisor of Easthaven is an albino tiger. Nobody knows where the spayed come from, but it is clear that they were once fertile. Spayed are ageless, but their wounds take a long time to heal and they are far from immortal. They are stoic and insightful though never ponderous.

If you are playing a spayed, you should add the nouns MANE and CALM to your wordhoard and copy down this ability: "Form a kenning: if you are holding the pack, look at the top four cards and place them back in any order."

The hartfolk are bipedal deer; both male and female hartfolk have proud and intricate antlers that, with understanding, can reveal lineage and temperament. Hartfolk are youthful but never impetuous. They place great importance on the “rightful fight” and will use this to settle disputes and test lovers alike.

If you are playing hartfolk, you should add the nouns HORN and SPREE to your wordhoard and copy down this ability: “Form a kenning: take two facing pairs from any pile and discard them.”

The leafmen are each born without skin or feature and take upon them the autumn leaves from the ground. In the gaps between their leaf cover, pricks of subtle light pick though; most keening is the baleful pulse of their seeming eyes. Leafmen are innovative and curious though never dismissive.

If you are playing a leafman, you should add the nouns FROND and SHARE to your wordhoard and copy down this ability: “Form a kenning: pick up the topmost four cards from any one pile and place them in any order on top of the pack.”

The adren are four-armed pseudo-snakes known as much for their toothless maws as the vivid diamond pattern on their backs. They are practical and determined but never stubborn. From the midnight moon of their hatching, each adr is filled with great purpose.

If you are playing an adr, you should add the nouns JAW and FIRM to your wordhoard and copy this ability: “Form a kenning: discard the facing card of any pile.”



When you have all chosen and crafted your characters, it is up to you to decide how to best the ogre-poet. You will need to decide upon a *strategy* and then break that strategy into the *passage* of three days.

For example, you could decide that your strategy is to steal the contents of the fabled library of the owl-bears; the first passage requires navigating a safe route through the echoing swamp, the second passage infiltrating the library and stealing its rarest books, the final passage dragging your haul back to Easthaven through the echoing swamp whilst the owl-bears are close on your tail.

You might decide that the best strategy is to burn the ogre-poet's tower to the ground; the first passage requires finding the noted sunmage, Lightcaller, in the haunted foothills, the second passage requires convincing Lightcaller to join you by helping him fend off a brazen of gnolls, the final passage involves sourcing the requirements for the dawnbirth ritual.

Be guided by the weird-fable tone of the game, but choose whatever the group would most enjoy.

Write the strategy and each passage down on another sheet of paper. Write the number thirty-six next to the first passage, forty-two next to the second and forty-eight next to the third.



The story is resolved through a variant of the patience game **Easthaven** (or **Aces Up**). Familiarity with that game will help, but it not essential. You'll pick up the rules pretty quickly as the story progresses.

Easthaven requires four piles in order to play. In the four-player game, each of you have ownership of one pile. In the two-player game, you each own two piles. In the three-player game, you each own one pile and the fourth pile should be kept between you.

The pack will rotate between players in a clockwise fashion, beginning with the player who is smallest. When you deal cards onto a pile, you should keep the indices of the cards below visible. The top card of each pile is called the *facing card*. As you deal, you should tell the story of the complications that the group faces.

If two or more cards of the same suit are facing, the lowest value card can be discarded. The player with the next lowest value describes how they help with the complication the story has presented them and takes the low card and adds it to their discard pile. (In the three-player game, if the communal pile would discard, the owner of the low card describes the actions and takes the card into their own discard pile.) If all facing cards are of different suits, no cards can be discarded.

At any point in this process, you may opt to activate your ability. Take two nouns from your wordhoard, cross them through and combine them into a kenning - an old form of metaphor where these two nouns combined describe an object or action, in that *whaleroad* means *sea* and *battlefriend* means *sword*. Under fear of the ogre-poet, creating a kenning brings magical power into the realm. You then describe how this creation helps you deal with the complications of the story.

If a pile becomes empty, a player may take the facing card from any other player (or in the three-player game, give it to the communal pile) so it becomes the facing card of their pile. As they do this, they should describe how they are assisting the other player.

Once no discards can be made, and if no players wish to activate abilities, the pack is passed to the player on your left. A total of thirteen

deals will be made (excluding a redeal created by the leafmen ability). The final deal should detail the complication that's key to completing this passage; all prior complications should lead to this point.

After all cards have been dealt and no further abilities wish to be played, count the total of each player's discard pile. If it equals or succeeds the target number for that passage (1st = 36; 2nd = 42; 3rd = 48) the players are successful. Players can trade one noun from their wordhoard to make up this number if necessary.

At the end of each passage, the last player to deal collects all cards and shuffles them together. At the end of the third passage, if the players fail to reach 48, their strategy fails and Easthaven falls to the ravenous hunger of the ogre-poet.



The sun is barely kissing the horizon when the four venture forth from Easthaven. Esp, an adr, leads the way, for she knows the location of the owl-bear library. She is followed by Mulch, a leafman, and MacVen, a hartfolk, who are discussing the monsters they might fight. The spayed, Paw, follows silently behind, dreading the dangers of the swamp.

Paw's player deals one card clockwise around the table - KC to Esp, 6S to Mulch, 8S to MacVen and 3H to himself. As he does so, he describes the developments:

Suddenly, out of the swamp before us loom two grotesquely bloated crocodiles, their glistening teeth slick with blood and grime. Their arrival surprises a solitary crow, a well-known messenger of the owl-bears, who caws once before taking wing and flapping in the direction of the library.

The only valid discard at this point is Mulch's 6S (to MacVen's 8S) and no player wishes to activate their abilities this early in the strategy. MacVen's player describes his actions as he takes the 6S into his discard pile:

The crocodile that's thrust from the water beside Mulch takes us by surprise and I pull Mulch back from its bite. I step forward and set my legs

in fighting stance and glare down the crocodile. It locks eye contact with me and I hold its gaze.

Since no other players can discard and none want to activate an ability, Paw's player passes the pack to his left and Esp takes it to deal the next complication...

Remember, this is a collaborative story-telling experience, so use your time to define aspects of the world and provide interesting elements to interact with. Players have ultimate control over what happens to them - you could have the ground open up beneath a player, but it's their choice if they fall or hang on to the edge. Be considerate to the other players and don't hog the limelight.



This game has been designed by Sean Smith as part of Game Chef 2014. If you've any questions or comments, feel free to email me on sean@bookseansmith.co.uk or contact me through Twitter [@seanfsmith](https://twitter.com/seanfsmith).